

## Christmas--Retro And Introspection

(Continued from page 1.)

the years roll on, grows beautiful in the retrospect. It is the past grandeur, the past splendor and destructibility in its perpetuity. If we could learn this, if we could adopt the maxim, apply the habit, secure to ourselves the business of co-operating among ourselves, we would be doing a good deed. Then wait a Christmas!

Our northern friends are astonished at the stupidity, the ignorance and the brotherly love of the Negroes coming from "farther down south" to the Training Camps in the north. But of course they do not know the whole story as it obtains here in the southland, and in their ignorance they have only pity for the poor men who are sent into the army from the south. Moreover, they are patient, lenient and roundabout in their treatment of these poor "raw" Negroes, some of whom don't even know their ages. I have heard that some of them whose ages are near forty years only believe themselves to be between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one years. Of course, this is ridiculous and even laughable; but who should bear the blame?

For every man dwelleth not in light; but unto as many as hath the light, the same should carry it unto those who are in darkness, that they might see and rejoice in the good works of light; nor perish because of darkness. Here's where the true Christmas spirit comes in. There is no more clamant need today than the need of the true spirit of Christmas. To leave our happy homes, our warm hearthside, our loving companions and our wealth and pleasures for the sake of enlightening those who are in the darkness of ignorance, would truly render us eligible as true believers in the Christ which was born on this day in Bethlehem of old, to kinship in his pre-eminent family of loving, self-sacrificing souls. For what are all of these things unto us if we do not the things which we ought to do, thus committing the great sin of omission to the hurt of those about us and to our own miserable destruction.

But, the Negro man is not a safe investment for himself. He refuses to look at possibilities; and his faith is too little in his own works. He organizes in a frenzy and splits asunder in a bedlam of abuse. There is little unity, little stability and scant co-operation. There is a woeful lack of investigative genius. A measly reluctance to face the truth as it pertains to the well-being of the whole mass is discernable. A shallowness of thought appertaining to the problems of life and how they may be best solved, is most obvious. A timid hesitancy to grasp and hold to the worthwhile things of life affecting the civil, political and religious status of the greatest number of souls, appears as a stumbling block to a more steady and well-defined progress. Gullibility and indecision, as well as mutative and often supercilious sentimentality, are traits which militate against progression, and account for a large number of

self-inflicted wounds from which the Negro daily suffers. There are some Negroes who just will not be led by another of their brethren, no matter how qualified he may be. And coupled with all the afore-mentioned comes the pusillanimous subservience so often manifested, and which helps to make the South's task of riding rough-shod over the Negro citizenry of particular sections one of comparative ease and often one of pleasure and amusement.

Sometimes I suggest that the Federal Government, through whose direct instrumentality the Negro was made a candidate for American citizenship, ought to be held responsible for the ignorance of the blacks; that it owes the boon of enlightenment as well as the right of protection; that it should see to it that they are given opportunities to become worthy and useful citizens, skilled in the arts and crafts which not only conduce to their individual worth as men, but also adds to the opulence of the Government, inasmuch as it is a recipient of a portion of the fruits of their labor. This would have been doing the Christmas spirit big. And there is no doubt but that such a step would have redounded to the good of the whole country, excepting traitors and aliens.

But I suppose that the Federal Government had pertinent reasons for neglecting the education of the Negro after he became a free man. And these reasons, I suppose, are perspicuous enough, notwithstanding the fact that they be so little appreciated. However, thoughtful minds will not fail to recognize the imperfection of the national mechanism in manumitting a horde of ignorant men, women and children without following this act up closely by efforts concerted and well defined, to at least give this new-born citizenry a rudimentary education, wherein the fundamental principles of domestic, political, religious and sociological economy would have been made to seek lodgement in their amazingly plastic minds. I repeat that such a step would have been doing the Christmas spirit big.

Such a step was never taken practically, though it is possible that it was given theoretical consideration out of a desire to allay speculative anxiety in regard to the ignorant Negro's future as a free instrument in an integral of society. And so, halting in the trenches of theory, the men who made him a free man left his intellectual emancipation largely to the philanthropist largely to himself and those true men and women of the north whose souls were brimful of the Christmas spirit in that they "came down to save." Whether these all labored to bring the Negro out of the slough of ignorance; and today find him shaking more and more of its putridness from off himself. But the task is a great one; the willing laborers are few indeed, especially among the Negroes themselves. Oh, yes, there are plenty to work in the old fields that have been cleared and long under cultivation, but there's a manifest reluctance, bordering on self-love and cowardice, when laborers are sought to clear up the new lands and the forest. No Christmas spirit here.

Because "there was none found who would stand in the gap and build up the hedge" destruction is imminent. The Negro suffers an inestimable impoverishment in racial status quo because of the lax of the

Christmas spirit towards his brother. If every man possessed all necessary faculties, and all of those were developed into competency so as to render each individual absolutely independent of another or others, this old earth would present a pitiable aspect as the rendezvous of men who lived in vain and whose hearts could not feel the tender touch awakened by the call of the brother in need. But it is not so. Men are diversified. Their various states and capabilities exhibit rare wisdom of a Cosmic mind, and a supernal dexterity of hands of a loftier and an Almighty being. Men are so created that they have need for each other; and whenever the Negro comes into the full realization of this fact he will cease to destroy the growing unity of his brethren, and lend his power and his efforts to the welding of that unity into a closer, more indestructible and a more honorable mass than has been heretofore. Moreover, he will not be content until that mass has come to learn a large ratio of those things which are ordained to make him a better a more useful citizen and a more needful man of the hour. The northern white man doesn't know this.

There's a truth that we won't have to guess at. And that truth is this, that the most of us are asinine. And an old ass never was known to possess an inkling of the Christmas spirit. He will bear the burdens thrust upon him and shun every honest duty he possibly can. So with most of us—north, south, east and west. Wait there, sir! I didn't call you an ass. I said, "the most of us"—you're just an imitation, sir. More's the pity, b'gad! But I am not the man to put a halter on the asses for fear I might be compelled to bridle myself. That's showing a lot more cowardice than the northerner—yes, he's a yankee, too! Everybody has heard of the north's traditional solicitude for the Negro. Everybody but the most putrid southerner and rebel will agree that it was the men and women of the north whose hearts were more like diamonds, sparkling in their purity, than like the musty peas of a dying forest, who put the "Negro" in "nigger" and loaned him eyes with which to see a wee bit of the brightness that runs wild all over God's great country about him.

But the latter-day northerners—some of them—allow themselves to be misled concerning the Negro's ability, adaptability, and his worth as a man if given a man's chance. And they come to think their misgivings well founded when, perchance, some Negro whose chances for acquiring ordinary, everyday proficiencies have been about as good or bountiful as good grain in the field of precocious taxes, falls at some unaccustomed task. Having never been taught to labor decently but to slave, there are many Negroes going into the north from the south who disgrace the race because of their idiotic acquittals, and become disgusted at what they imagine to be insufferable laboring conditions. Leaving, they think not of the stain which they have besmirched a struggling people with in their ignorance; and the northern white man doesn't stop to inquire into the cause of such poor performance, and then and there stamps the Negro as a "funny creature."

You, Mr. Capitalist, get the Christmas spirit. Invest a few of your life

dollars in a worthy cause. Educate the Negro in your industries, and see for yourself that he's the greatest industrial asset of which the country may boast. He'd do it for you.

### Conclusion.

And now have I spoken all of these sayings unto the edification of as many of my brethren as do truly love the Christmas spirit. I am ready, therefore, to conclude with great gratitude to the God and Father of us all whose divine presence makes a true Christmas in the homes of the humble and by the fire-side of the upright. I am thankful, too, that he has granted me a portion of his spirit, that my soul yearns intensely for the good of all my brethren; and that I can realize that Christmas, as we treat it traditionally, is but the precursor of an eternal season of rejoicings in the substance of a brotherly love. May that day be not far off. Yea, it is not far away, for in my spirit I can hear the distant music of the trumpeters, heralding the entrance of the Prince of Peace, whose Kingdom shall have no end, and whose dominion shall be forever and forever.

A World on Fire rises before me, and I see away across the intervening space into the distant years when Christmas will be an everlasting season; when men shall love and honor the great and merciful God, confessing unto all men His majesty and His super-eminence, and His undeniable right to the sovereignty of the world. A World is on fire "over there," the nations having driven the Christmas spirit from its wonted perch, the spirit of Evil now sits serenely, and anon, croaking, croaking in weird tones over the numberless bodies of the sacrificial dead, whose souls have gone "unvendered" to await the calling of the trumpet whose blast shall resound distinctly in the bosom of the grave. Haste! Haste! Haste! O Sovereign Spirit, and return.

Cumberland Furnace, Tenn., December 9, 1917.

Dear Santa Claus:—  
I am a very large girl, I am fourteen years of age and go to school every day and I study the fourth R grade. My teacher's name is R. E. Armstrong. She is very nice, don't forget her. I want you to bring me some working thread, some oranges, apples, candy and I can crochet and make lots of stitches and don't forget my playmates at school. I obey my mother and father and don't forget my mother, father, sisters and brother. One of my sisters is in Birmingham, Ala., and my brother is in Nashville. Don't forget him. Bring my sister something nice and bring something, he lives at 607 Ramsey street.

From  
MARTHA TARTLTON.

Franklin, Tenn., Dec., 1917.  
I will be sixteen years old the 29th of December. I have been very good all the time. And will you bring me a long green cloak, a green hat, a pair of tan shoes, a blue woolen dress and a pair of kid gloves. Please don't forget my father and mother and grandpa, bring them something nice. And please bring me plenty of good things to eat. I study the 7th grade and would like for you to bring me

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A story book. Santa please don't forget my dear aunt Lue Rucker, you'll find her at 1397 Chandler street, Topeka, Kan., and bring all the rest of my aunts something nice and don't forget my friends. I won't ask for anything else.  
ANNIE LUE GENTRY.

Franklin, Tenn., Dec. 10, 1917.  
Dear Santa Claus:—  
I am a little girl twelve years old. I study the sixth grade. All I want you to bring me is a cloak, a blue winter dress, a pair of shoes and everything nice to eat. Remember my little classmate, she is a good girl and also my teacher and his little girl, Prof. and little Winnie Reynolds. I hope you won't have any trouble coming down the chimney. I will go to bed early.  
Your little girl,  
MATTIE A. GENTRY.

1888

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